Agricultural Conservation: A Guide to Programs

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Summary

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Farm Service Agency (FSA) in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) currently administer over 20 programs and subprograms that are directly or indirectly available to assist producers and landowners who wish to practice conservation on agricultural lands. The number, scope, and overall funding of these programs has grown in recent years. This growth can cause some confusion over which problems and conditions each program addresses, and specific program characteristics and performance. The programs are as follows:

- Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) Program
- Chesapeake Bay Watershed Program
- Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI)
- Conservation Operations (CO); Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA)
- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)
- CRP—Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)
- CRP—Farmable Wetlands Program
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
- Emergency Conservation Program (ECP)
- Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
- EQIP—Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP)
- EQIP—Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)
- Farmland Protection Program (FPP)
- Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)
- Healthy Forest Reserve Program (HFRP)
- Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Program
- Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program
- Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations
- Watershed Rehabilitation Program
- Wetland Reserve Program (WRP)
- Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)

This tabular presentation provides basic information introducing each of the programs. In each case, a brief program description is followed by information on major amendments in the 2008 farm bill (P.L. 110-246); national scope and availability; states with the greatest participation; the backlog of applications or other measures of continuing interest; program funding authority; FY2012 funding; FY2013 Administration budget request; FY2013 funding where available; statutory authority; the authorization expiration date; and a link to the program's website.

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Introduction

Currently, more than 20 U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) agricultural conservation programs exist to assist private landowners with natural resource concerns. Though some similarities among these programs exist, each is administered with slight differences. These differences and the number of programs create some general confusion about the purpose, participation, and policies of the programs.

The number of agricultural conservation programs has steadily increased over the past 60 years. Early conservation efforts were focused on reducing high levels of soil erosion and providing water to agriculture in quantities and quality that enhanced farm production. Congress responded to these issues by creating and revising programs designed to reduce resource problems on the farm. By the early 1980s, however, concern was growing that these programs were not adequately dealing with environmental problems resulting from agricultural activities (especially off the farm). In 1985, conservation policy took a new direction when Congress passed the Food Security Act of 1985 (1985 farm bill, P.L. 99-198), which established the first conservation programs designed to deal with environmental issues resulting from agricultural activities.

Provisions enacted in subsequent farm bills, including in 1990, 1996, 2002, and 2008,[1] reflect a rapid evolution of the conservation agenda, including the growing influence of environmentalists and other non-agricultural interests in the formulation of conservation policy, and a recognition that agriculture was not treated like other business sectors in many environmental laws.[2] Congress also began funding many of these new programs through mandatory spending for the first time, using the borrowing authority of USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC)[3] as the funding mechanism instead of annual appropriations. In addition to the original soil erosion and water quality and quantity issues, the conservation agenda has continued to expand to address other natural resource concerns, such as wildlife habitat, air quality, wetlands restoration and protection, energy efficiency, and sustainable agriculture.

Lead agricultural conservation agencies within USDA are the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), which provides technical assistance and administers most conservation programs, and the Farm Service Agency (FSA), which administers the largest program, the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). These agencies are supported by others in USDA that supply research and educational assistance, including the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), the Economic Research Service (ERS), and the Forest Service (FS).[4] In addition, the conservation effort involves a large array of partners, including other federal agencies, state and local governments, and private organizations, among others, who provide funds, expertise, and other forms of assistance to the conservation effort.

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[1] Conservation and Trade Act of 1990 (P.L. 101-624), Federal Agricultural Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-127), Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-171), and Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246).

[2] For additional discussion on conservation in the next farm bill, see CRS Report R42093, *Agricultural Conservation and the Next Farm Bill*.

[3] The CCC is the funding mechanism for the mandatory payments that are administered by various agencies of USDA, including all of the farm commodity price and income support programs.

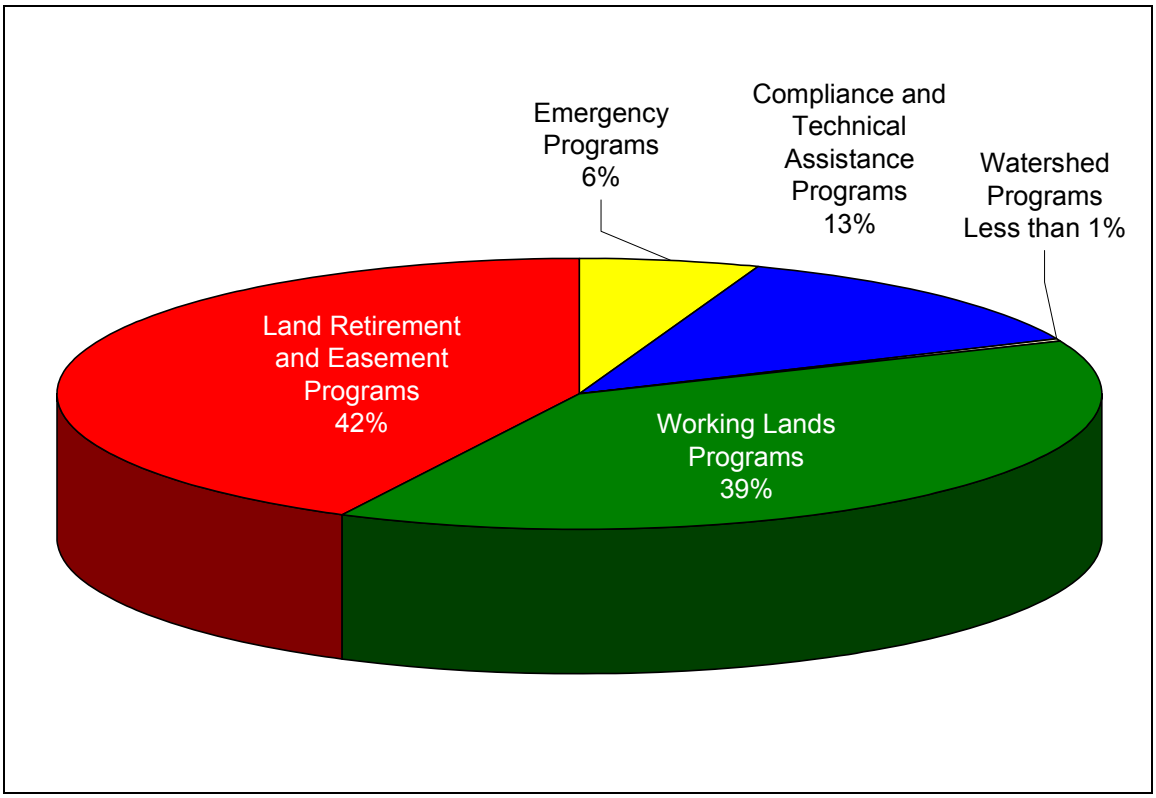
[4] For more information on: ARS projects, see http://www.ars.usda.gov/Research/Research.htm; ERS projects, see http://www.ers.usda.gov/Browse/view.aspx?subject=NaturalResourcesEnvironment; and FS projects, see http://www.fs.fed.us/projects/.

Overview

USDA provides technical and financial assistance to attract interest and encourage participation in conservation programs. Participation in all USDA conservation programs is voluntary. These programs protect soil, water, wildlife, and other natural resources on privately owned agricultural lands to limit environmental impacts of production activities both on and off the farm, while maintaining or improving production of food and fiber. Some of these programs center on improving or restoring resources that have been degraded, while others create conditions to limit degradation in the future.

Though programs in this report are listed alphabetically, they can be grouped into the following categories based on similarities: working land programs, land retirement and easement programs, watershed programs, emergency programs, compliance and technical assistance programs, and other. **Figure 1** illustrates the relative size of each group based on the amount of funding available in FY2012.

Figure 1. FY2012 Funding for Conservation Programs



Source: CRS, Funding estimates compiled from the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2012 (P.L. 112-55) and Congressional Budget Office, *CBO March 2012 Baseline for CCC & FCIC*, March 2012.

Notes: Technical assistance includes funding for compliance programs. Funding for extension and research is not included. Total funding for conservation programs is approximately $6.5 billion.

The majority of conservation programs are funded through USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) as mandatory spending. Congress authorizes mandatory programs at specified funding levels each year (or acreage enrollment levels for the Conservation Reserve,

Conservation Stewardship, Wetlands Reserve, and Grasslands Reserve Programs). They are funded at these levels unless Congress limits funding to a lower amount through the appropriations or legislative process (or puts a ceiling on acreage that can be enrolled).[5] Discretionary programs are funded each year through the annual appropriations process.

Despite a steady increase in mandatory funding authority, many conservation programs have been reduced or capped through annual appropriations acts since FY2003. Many of these spending reductions were at the request of the Bush Administration, though the Obama Administration has continued the requested reductions, including in the FY2013 proposal. The mix of programs and amounts of reduction has varied from year to year. Some programs, such as the CRP, have not been reduced by appropriators in recent years, while others, such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), have been repeatedly reduced below authorized levels. Overall authorized mandatory funding for conservation programs was reduced by close to $4.6 billion between FY2005 and FY2012. Even with the reductions, total mandatory funding for conservation programs has grown from a total of $3.6 billion in FY2005 to over $6 billion in FY2012.

2008 Farm Bill Expiration & Extension

The 2008 farm bill generally expired on September 30, 2012, or with the 2012 crop year. The American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012 (P.L. 112-240) extended all 2008 farm bill provisions that were in effect on September 30, 2012, for one additional year until September 30, 2013.[6] There is no net cost to the extension because mandatory funding to continue most of the major farm bill programs was already in the budget baseline. A subset of the 2008 farm bill programs did not have a continuing mandatory baseline and did not receive any additional mandatory funding under the extension.[7] Several conservation programs with permanent authority to receive discretionary funding were funded until March 27, 2013, in the 2013 Continuing Appropriations Resolution (P.L. 112-175).[8] Some conservation programs with authority to receive mandatory funding were previously extended to September 30, 2014, in the FY2012 Agriculture Appropriations Act (P.L. 112-55).[9] The authority of each program, including the date of expiration, is included in this report.

[5] For additional information, see CRS Report R41245, *Reductions in Mandatory Agriculture Program Spending*. For reductions in FY2012, see CRS Report R41964, *Agriculture and Related Agencies: FY2012 Appropriations*.

[6] For additional information on regarding the extension, see CRS Report R42442, *Expiration and Extension of the 2008 Farm Bill*.

[7] For additional information on which programs do not have baseline funding, see CRS Report R41433, *Expiring Farm Bill Programs Without a Budget Baseline.*

[8] Examples of these programs include Conservation Operations and Watershed Rehabilitation. For additional information on the FY2013 agricultural appropriations, see CRS Report R42596, *Agriculture and Related Agencies: FY2013 Appropriations*.

[9] These programs include the Conservation Stewardship Program, Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Farmland Protection Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, and portions of the Agricultural Management Assistance program. For additional information on these extensions, see CRS Report R41964, *Agriculture and Related Agencies: FY2012 Appropriations*.

Conservation Programs

The tabular presentation that follows provides basic information introducing each of the USDA agricultural conservation programs, including:

- administering agency or agencies within USDA;
- a brief program description;
- major amendments to the program in the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246), commonly referred to as the 2008 farm bill;
- national scope and availability, including participation levels and acres enrolled where available;
- states with the highest level of funds obligated or acres enrolled (where applicable);
- the volume of application backlog or public interest in each program;
- the authorized funding levels, whether it is mandatory spending or discretionary appropriations, and any funding restrictions where applicable;
- the FY2012 funding level provided by the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act of 2012 (P.L. 112-55) or, if applicable, the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246), as amended, authorized level;
- the FY2013 funding level requested by the Administration;
- the FY2013 funding level provided by the Continuing Appropriations Resolution, 2013 (P.L. 112-175) until March 27, 2013, or, if applicable, the authorized level in the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, as amended;
- statutory authority, recent amendments, and U.S. Code reference;
- the expiration date of program authority unless permanently authorized; and
- a link to the program's website.

Information for the following tables is drawn from agency budget presentations, explanatory notes, and websites; written responses to questions published each year in hearing records of the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittees of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees; and spending estimates from the Congressional Budget Office. Further information about these programs may be found on the NRCS website at http://www.nrcs.usda.gov and on the "conservation programs" page of the FSA website at http://www.fsa.usda.gov.

USDA Agricultural Conservation Programs

Working Lands Programs—typically classified as programs that allow private land to remain in production, while implementing various conservation practices to address natural resource concerns specific to the area.

- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)/Conservation Security Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP), and Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) program.

Land Retirement and Easement Programs—land retirement programs provide federal payments to private agricultural landowners for *temporary* changes in land use or management to achieve environmental benefits. Conversely, conservation easements impose a *permanent* land-use restriction that is voluntarily placed on the land in exchange for a government payment.

- Conservation Reserve Program (includes the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and Farmable Wetlands), Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), Farmland Protection Program (FPP), Grassland Reserve Program (GRP), and Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP).

Watershed Programs—NRCS partners with local sponsors to carry out activities for soil conservation; flood prevention; conservation, development, utilization, and disposal of water; watershed surveys; and dam and flood structure rehabilitation.

- Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations (also referred to as the Small Watershed Programs, P.L. 566 and P.L. 534), Watershed Rehabilitation, and Watershed Surveys and Planning.

Emergency Programs—provide disaster assistance for farmland rehabilitation and impairments to watersheds. Programs are usually funded through supplemental appropriation acts.

- Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) and Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program (includes floodplain easements).

Compliance—prohibits a producer from receiving many federal farm program benefits (including conservation assistance) when conservation program requirements for highly erodible lands and wetlands are not met.

- Highly erodible land conservation (Sodbuster), wetland conservation (Swampbuster), and Sodsaver.

Technical Assistance Programs—provides landowners with science-based conservation information and technical expertise (e.g., engineering and biological) unique to the region and land use type. Usually does not include financial assistance.

- Conservation Operations (includes Conservation Technical Assistance, Survey, Soil Survey, Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative, and Plant Materials Centers), Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) program.

Other Conservation Programs and Provisions—Chesapeake Bay Watershed Program, Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative, Conservation Innovation Grants, Great Lakes Basin Program, Regional Equity, State Technical Committees, Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program, and Grassroots Source Water Protection Program.

Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) Program

Administering agency(s)	NRCS (conservation assistance), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS, organic certification), and Risk Management Agency (RMA, production, price, or revenue risk reduction).
Program description	AMA provides cost-sharing assistance under contracts of 1 to 10 years to producers in 16 specified states where participation in the federal crop insurance program has been historically low. Producers use this assistance to construct or improve water management and irrigation structures, plant trees, control soil erosion, practice integrated pest management, practice organic farming, develop value-added processing, and enter into futures, hedging, or options contracts to reduce production, price, or revenue risk.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	Adds Hawaii as an eligible state; authorizes funding of $15 million annually from FY2008 through FY2012, and $10 million in subsequent years; and designates program funding for USDA agencies: 50% - NRCS, 10% - AMS, and 40% - RMA.
National scope	Not available nationwide. Eligible states include: CT, DE, HI, MD, MA, ME, NV, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, UT, VT, WV, and WY. As of the end of FY2011, 673 contracts are being implemented within these states.
Leading states	States with the most funds obligated (for conservation only) in FY2011 include ME ($2.3 million), PA ($0.9 million), and NY ($0.8 million).
Backlog/Interest	A backlog of 648 applications was pending at the end of FY2011, up from a backlog of 767 applications in FY2010. These applications would enroll more than 10,825 acres at a cost of $9.4 million.
Funding authority	Mandatory. Permanently authorized at $10 million for each fiscal year except FY2008-FY2014, which is authorized at $15 million for each fiscal year. Funding is split by law between the three USDA agencies: 50% - NRCS, 10% - AMS, and 40% - RMA.
FY2012 funding	$10 million ($2.5 million for conservation, authorization reduced by $5 million).
FY2013 Administration request	$10 million ($2.5 million for conservation, authorization reduced by $5 million).
FY2013 funding	Continuation of the FY2012 levels, including the reduction in authority, until March 27, 2013.
Statutory authority	Authorized in Title I, §133 of the Agricultural Risk Protection Act of 2000 (P.L. 106-224) as §524(b) of the Federal Crop Insurance Act, as amended. Amended in §2801 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246). 7 U.S.C. 1524(b).
Authorization expires	Permanent authorization.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/ama

Chesapeake Bay Watershed Program

Administering agency(s)	NRCS.
Program description	The Chesapeake Bay Watershed Program provides additional financial assistance through existing conservation programs for areas within the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Law requires special consideration for producers in the Susquehanna, Shenandoah, Potomac, and Patuxent river basins. Program rules, contracts, and sign-up depend on the program through which NRCS is providing the funds. Eligible programs under the program include the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI), Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP). EQIP, CCPI, and WHIP are discussed further below.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	Program created in the 2008 farm bill.
National scope	Not available nationwide. The program applies to all tributaries, backwaters, and side channels, including watersheds draining into the Chesapeake Bay. This includes areas within DE, MD, NY, PA, VA, and WV. In FY2011, more than 1,700 applications were approved to treat an estimated 243,500 acres.
Leading states	In FY2011, states with the most funding obligated were PA ($22.8 million), VA ($19.2 million), and MD ($14.5 million).
Backlog/Interest	Nearly 3,500 applications were received in FY2011, of which 1,700, or 48.5%, were approved.
Funding authority	Mandatory. FY2009 - $23 million; FY2010 - $43 million; FY2011 - $72 million; and FY2012 - $50 million.
FY2012 funding	$50 million.
FY2013 Administration request	$50 million (subject to reauthorization).
FY2013 funding	$50 million; funding authority extended to September 30, 2013, in the American Taxpayers Relief Act (P.L. 112-240).
Statutory authority	Authorized in Title II, §2605 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246) as §1240Q of the Food Security Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198). 16 U.S.C. 3839bb-4.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2013.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/national/home/?&cid=stelprdb1047323

Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI)

Administering agency(s)	NRCS.
Program description	The Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI) enables the use of certain conservation programs along with the resources of eligible partners to provide financial and technical assistance to owners and operators of agricultural and nonindustrial private forest land. CCPI applies to all conservation programs under Subtitle D of the Food Security Act of 1985, as amended, excluding CRP, WRP, FPP, and GRP. Eligible programs include EQIP, CSP, WHIP, Great Lakes Basin Program, Conservation of Private Grazing Land, Chesapeake Bay Watershed Program, and Grassroots Source Water Protection Program. NRCS enters into multi-year agreements with partners in an approved project area to help enhance conservation outcomes. Six percent of the funds and acres available from eligible conservation programs are reserved for CCPI until April 1 each fiscal year, when unused funds may be reallocated. Locally led projects are encouraged, with 90% of funds available for within-state competitions and 10% of funds available for a national competition.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	Program created in the 2008 farm bill.
National scope	Available nationwide. State participation varies depending on within-state competition and the selection of projects at the national level. In FY2011, NRCS offered a separate Chesapeake Bay CCPI competition through the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Program.
Leading states	In FY2011, states receiving the most CCPI funding through the Chesapeake Bay Watershed program are MD ($2.2 million), DE ($715,000), and PA ($464,000). Information on the national CCPI competition and within-state competitions is not available.
Backlog/Interest	None identified.
Funding authority	Mandatory. Six percent of the funds and acres available from eligible conservation programs.
FY2012 funding	Not applicable.
FY2013 Administration request	Not applicable.
FY2013 funding	Not applicable; authority extended to September 30, 2013, in the American Taxpayers Relief Act (P.L. 112-240).
Statutory authority	Authorized in Title II, §2707 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246), as §1243 of the Food Security Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198). 16 U.S.C. 3843.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2013.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ccpi/index.html

Conservation Operations (CO)— Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA)

Administering agency(s)	NRCS.
Program description	Conservation Operations (CO) is the primary account funding technical assistance within NRCS. More than 80% of CO funding is for Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA), which provides conservation planning and implementation assistance through field staff placed in almost all counties within the United States and territories. This assistance is provided to producers and land owners who voluntarily apply natural resource conservation systems, consisting of one or more practices, on private and other non-federal lands. Other components of CO include the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative, soil surveys, snow surveys, and plant material centers.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	Amends the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act to include a definition of technical assistance and agriculture commodity. Other provisions indirectly affect this program, including allowing NRCS to approve qualified individuals and entities, referred to as third parties, to provide some types of technical assistance and retaining a cap on total funding for technical assistance provided through mandatory programs.
National scope	Available nationwide. CTA was funded at $745 million and 5,341 staff years for FY2011, according to the FY2013 budget notes. Total CO spending for FY2011 was $870.5 million and 6,201 staff years.
Leading states	No data are available for the CTA subset in FY2011, but the three leading states for total CO funding (estimate) are TX ($40.5 million), MO ($20.4 million), and IA ($20.2 million).
Backlog/Interest	Not available.
Funding authority	Discretionary. No amount specified.
FY2012 funding	$729.5 million for CTA out of $828.2 million for all CO.
FY2013 Administration request	$728.8 million for CTA out of $827.5 million for all CO.
FY2013 funding	Continuation of FY2012 funding levels until March 27, 2013.
Statutory authority	Authorized in the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act (P.L. 74-46), as amended. Amended in §2802 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246). 16 U.S.C. 590a-g, 16 U.S.C. 590q.
Authorization expires	Permanent authorization.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cta/ (CTA); http://www.glti.nrcs.usda.gov/ (grazing); http://soils.usda.gov/ (soil survey); http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/ (snow survey); and http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/ (plant materials).

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

Administering agency(s)	FSA, technical assistance by NRCS.
Program description	CRP provides annual rental payments, usually over 10 years, to producers to replace crops on highly erodible and environmentally sensitive land with long-term resource conserving plantings. Bids to enroll land are solicited during a limited time period, then compared using an Environmental Benefits Index (EBI). Those with the highest EBI scores are accepted. Imbedded in the CRP are several small and more focused programs that bypass the general bidding process, some established in law and others established administratively, to address specific resource topics, including more concentrated resource problems in a portion of a state, protection of small isolated agricultural wetlands, and improvement of habitat for upland game birds. All lands that qualify for these subprograms are automatically accepted.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	Reduces enrollment ceiling from 39.2 million acres to 32 million acres; amends haying and grazing conditions; and authorizes incentives to assist socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers.
National scope	Available nationwide. In FY2012, USDA announced the 43rd general sign-up, in which nearly 48,000 offers on more than 4.5 million acres were received. Of these offers, 3.3 million acres were reenrolled and 559,850 new acres were enrolled. Nationally, there are 738,544 active contracts on 409,598 farms with 29.5 million acres enrolled, according to FSA's September 2012 monthly program summary.
Leading states	Leading states in terms of acres are TX (3.4 million), KS (2.5 million), and MT (2.5 million). Leading states in terms of number of contracts are IA (106,470), IL (83,363), and MN (62,290).
Backlog/Interest	In FY2011, enrollment ended at 31.1 million acres. Expiration of contracts (4.4 million acres) and new contracts dropped enrollment to 29.6 million acres in October 2011. Approximately 2.2 million acres came out of contract on September 30, 2011, and were not reenrolled. Under the 43rd general sign-up, 4.54 million acres were offered, 3.88 million acres were determined acceptable, and 3.4 million acres were enrolled.
Funding authority	Mandatory. No more than 32 million acres enrolled at any one time. No funding amount specified.
FY2012 est. funding	$2.1 billion (based on the estimated number of acres that will be enrolled, including technical assistance).
FY2013 Administration request	Mandatorily funded, therefore no funding level specified. Subject to reauthorization.
FY2013 est. funding	$2.2 billion (based on the estimated number of acres that will be enrolled, including technical assistance); program and funding authority extended to September 30, 2013, in the American Taxpayers Relief Act (P.L. 112-240).
Statutory authority	Authorized in §1231-§1235 of the Food Security Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198), as amended. Amended in §2101 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246). 16 U.S.C. 3831(a)-3835a.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2013.
Program website	http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=copr&topic=crp

CRP—Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

Administering agency(s)	FSA, technical assistance by NRCS.
Program description	This subprogram of CRP partners with states at their request. States propose sub-state areas, such as a watershed, where environmental or resource concerns are more concentrated and can be addressed by enrolling up to 100,000 acres per project. States contribute 20% of the funding so that larger payments can be made, in order to encourage greater participation.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	None.
National scope	32 states have active CREP contracts (73,116) on 48,165 farms, enrolling a total of 1.3 million acres, according to FSA's September 2012 monthly program summary.
Leading states	Leading states in terms of acres enrolled are PA (192,281), IL (140,605), and OH (112,342). States leading in number of contracts are OH (12,880), PA (10,878), and IL (7,502).
Backlog/Interest	Not applicable since any eligible land can be enrolled at any time; participation has been much higher in some states than in others, but that is due, reportedly, to how the program is promoted. Average rental payments are higher than for acreage under the general CRP sign-up process.
Funding authority	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
FY2012 funding	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
FY2013 Administration request	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
FY2013 funding	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP; program and funding authority extended to September 30, 2013, in the American Taxpayers Relief Act (P.L. 112-240).
Statutory authority	Authority derived from CRP statutory authority (see "Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)").
Authorization expires	September 30, 2013.
Program website	http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=copr&topic=cep

CRP—Farmable Wetlands Program

Administering agency(s)	FSA, technical assistance by NRCS.
Program description	This 1 million acre subprogram of the CRP enrolls small isolated agricultural wetlands. On a single tract of land, enrollment is now set at a maximum of 40 contiguous wetland acres. "Flooded farmland" has a 20-acre limit. Eligible lands include wetlands that were cropped 3 of the preceding 10 years, and buffers sufficient to protect them, on which the hydrology will be restored and a vegetative cover established.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	Caps enrollment at 100,000 acres in any state and 1 million acres total. Expands enrollment of wetland and buffer acreage to include land that had been cropped during 3 of 10 crop years prior to 2002 and after 1990 and is subject to a natural overflow of a prairie wetland. Increases the maximum wetland size to 40 contiguous acres and makes all acres eligible for payment.
National scope	Active contracts in 22 participating states, including AL, AR, CO, ID, IL, IN, IA, KS, LA, MD, MI, MN, MS, MO, MT, NE, NC, ND, OH, OK, SD, and WI. According to FSA's September 2012 monthly program summary, 15,276 contracts on 11,890 farms have enrolled a total of 316,459 acres.
Leading states	In terms of acres, the leading states are ND (83,837 acres), SD (83,029 acres), and IA (79,635 acres). The largest number of contracts are in IA (5,087), followed by SD (3,909) and MN (3,218).
Backlog/Interest	Not applicable since any eligible land can be enrolled at any time; participation has been much higher in some states than in others, but that is due, reportedly, to how the program is promoted.
Funding authority	Mandatory. No more than 1 million acres enrolled at any one time and no more than 100,000 acres in any state (may be increased to 150,000 acres after three years).
FY2012 funding	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
FY2013 Administration request	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
FY2013 funding	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP; program and funding authority extended to September 30, 2013, in the American Taxpayers Relief Act (P.L. 112-240).
Statutory authority	Authorized in Title XI of Agriculture and Related Agency appropriations, 2001 (P.L. 106-387) as §1231B of the Food Security Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198), as amended. Amended by §2106 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246). 16 U.S.C. 3831b.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2013.
Program website	http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=copr&topic=fwp

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

Administering agency(s)	NRCS.
Program description	The new CSP replaces the Conservation Security Program and provides financial and technical assistance to promote the conservation and improvement of soil, water, air, energy, plant and animal life, and other conservation purposes on tribal and private working lands. Contracts (five years in length with the option of extension) are based on meeting or exceeding a "stewardship threshold." Payments are based on the actual costs of installing conservation measures, any foregone income, and the value of the expected environmental outcomes.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	The new CSP will continue to encourage conservation practices on working lands, but will be different from the former Conservation Security Program. It eliminates the three-tier approach, establishes 5-year rather than 10-year contracts, and requires direct attribution of payments, among other changes, thus requiring that USDA promulgate new rules for the program.
National scope	The first CSP sign-up was held August 10, 2009. Two ranking periods occurred in 2010, which resulted in more than 20,000 contracts on over 25 million acres. The FY2011 sign-up process resulted in an additional 9,630 CSP contracts on over 12.75 million acres. The first ranking period for FY2012 closed on January 27, 2012.
Leading states	In FY2011, MN had the most contracts funded (764), followed by IA (713) and MO (711). NE had the most total acres funded (1.3 million), followed by MT (964,233) and NM (905,792). The most funding obligated in FY2011 was in MN ($16.5 million), NE ($13.1 million), and ND ($12.7 million).
Backlog/Interest	In FY2011, 9,630 applications were funded and 4,784 applications went unfunded; 67% of valid applications were funded.
Funding authority	Mandatory. 12.769 million acres each fiscal year. No funding amount specified.
FY2012 funding	$768.5 million (authorization reduced by approximately $76.5 million).
FY2013 Administration request	$972.1 million (authorization reduced permanently by 759,632 acres).
FY2013 funding	Continuation of the FY2012 levels, including the reduction in authority, until March 27, 2013.
Statutory authority	Authorized in §2301 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246) as §1238D-§1238G of the Food Security Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198). 16 U.S.C. 3838h-3838n.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2014.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/csp

Emergency Conservation Program (ECP)

Administering agency(s)	FSA, technical assistance by NRCS.
Program description	Provides emergency funding and technical assistance to producers to rehabilitate farmland damaged by natural disasters (e.g., hurricanes, floods, wind, and erosion) through activities such as removing debris, and implementing emergency water conservation measures in response to severe droughts.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	None.
National scope	Available nationwide. Participation varies widely and unpredictably from year to year. The Disaster Relief Appropriations Act of 2013 (P.L. 113-2) provided $15 million to be used for necessary expenses related to the consequences of Hurricane Sandy and major disasters declared pursuant to the Stafford Act (42 U.S.C. 5121 et seq.) only.
Leading states	Not applicable.
Backlog/Interest	Not applicable.
Funding authority	Discretionary. No funding amount specified.
FY2012 funding	$122.7 million.
FY2013 Administration request	The Administration requested $15 million on December 7, 2012, for damages resulting from Hurricane Sandy.
FY2013 funding to date	$15 million.
Statutory authority	Authorized in §401 of the Agriculture Credit Act of 1978 (P.L. 95-334), as amended. 16 U.S.C. 2201-2205.
Authorization expires	Permanent authorization.
Program website	http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=copr&topic=ecp

Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program

Administering agency(s)	NRCS on private lands, U.S. Forest Service on National Forest Systems lands.
Program description	EWP provides technical and financial assistance to reduce hazards to life and property in watersheds that have been damaged by natural disasters. Assistance includes disaster cleanup and recovery activities, and purchasing easements in flood plains that will benefit natural resources such as wetlands, while reducing the risk of exposure to future natural disasters.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	None.
National scope	Available nationwide. Participation varies widely and unpredictably from year to year. The Disaster Relief Appropriations Act of 2013 (P.L. 113-2) provided $180 million to be used for necessary expenses related to the consequences of Hurricane Sandy and major disasters declared pursuant to the Stafford Act (42 U.S.C. 5121 et seq.) only.
Leading states	Not applicable.
Backlog/Interest	Not applicable.
Funding authority	Discretionary. No funding amount specified.
FY2012 funding	$215.9 million.
FY2013 Administration request	The Administration requested $180 million ($30 million for response and recovery and $150 million for mitigation efforts) on December 7, 2012, for damages resulting from Hurricane Sandy.
FY2013 funding to date	$180 million.
Statutory authority	Authorized in §216 of P.L. 81-516 and §403 of the Agriculture Credit Act of 1978 (P.L. 95-334), as amended. 16 U.S.C. 2203; and 33 U.S.C. 701b-1.
Authorization expires	Permanent authorization.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/landscape/ewpp

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Administering agency(s)	NRCS.
Program description	EQIP provides financial and technical assistance to producers and land owners to plan and install structural, vegetative, and land management practices on eligible lands to alleviate natural resource problems. Eligible producers enter into contracts to receive payment for implementing conservation practices. Approved activities are carried out according to an EQIP plan developed in conjunction with the producer that identifies the appropriate conservation practice(s) to address resource concerns on the land. Sixty percent of the funds are targeted to livestock producers. EQIP is the largest working lands program.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	Lowers the limitation on payments to a total of $300,000, down from $450,000; limits projects with organic production benefits to $20,000 annually or $80,000 in any six-year period; authorizes a new water enhancement program (see "EQIP—Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP)"); reauthorizes the innovative grants program (see "EQIP—Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)"); retains the allocation of 60% of funding each year to practices related to livestock production.
National scope	Available nationwide. In FY2011, EQIP allocated $871 million for 38,352 contracts covering 13 million acres, according to information in the FY2013 budget notes.
Leading states	In FY2011, the top three states by contracts signed were TX (4,163), MS (2,453), and CA (1,691). The most funding obligated was in TX ($106.2 million), CA ($90.1 million), and MO ($37 million).
Backlog/Interest	In FY2011, 38,352 applications were funded and 25,467 applications went unfunded. According to information in the FY2013 budget notes, 60% of valid applications were funded in FY2011. The total estimated cost of this backlog is $534 million. The most unfunded applications were submitted in TX (2,935), AR (2,363), and NE (1,865).
Funding authority	Mandatory. FY2009 - $1.377 billion, FY2010 - $1.45 billion, FY2011 - $1.588 billion, FY2012 - $1.75 billion, FY2013 - $1.75 billion, and FY2014 - $1.75 billion.
FY2012 funding	$1.4 billion (authorization reduced by $350 million).
FY2013 Administration request	$1.4 billion (authorization reduced by $350 million).
FY2013 funding	Continuation of the FY2012 levels, including the reduction in authority, until March 27, 2013.
Statutory authority	Authorized in subtitle D of Title III (§331-336) of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-127) as §1240-§1240I of the Food Security Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198), as amended. Amended by §2501 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246). 16 U.S.C. 3839aa-3839aa90.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2014.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/eqip

EQIP—Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP)

Administering agency(s)	NRCS.
Program description	AWEP is a subprogram of EQIP. The program provides financial and technical assistance to producers and land owners to address water quality and quantity concerns on agricultural land. The program replaces the Ground and Surface Water Conservation program and the Klamath Basin program. AWEP addresses water quality and quantity concerns through eligible partners and established priority areas.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	Program created in the 2008 farm bill.
National scope	Available nationwide, although not every state includes an eligible project area. In FY2011, AWEP obligated $59 million to 1,300 new contracts covering 250,000 acres, according to information in the FY2013 budget notes. A total of 8 new project area proposals were approved in the national competition. The 91 project areas approved in FY2009 and FY2010 continued to receive support.
Leading states	In FY2011, the top three states by applications funded were CA (1,050), NE (548), and TX (258). The most funding obligated was in CA ($21.3 million), TX ($6 million), and NE ($5.4 million). States with the most total applications received were CA (1,050), NE (548), and TX (258).
Backlog/Interest	In FY2011, approximately 50% of valid applications went unfunded. The total estimated cost of this backlog is $121.5 million. The highest numbers of unfunded applications were in CA (818), NE (354), and TX (203).
Funding authority	Mandatory. FY2009 - $73 million, FY2010 - $73 million, FY2011 - $74 million, FY2012 and each year thereafter - $60 million.
FY2012 funding	$60 million.
FY2013 Administration request	$60 million.
FY2013 funding	$60 million.
Statutory authority	Authorized in subtitle F of Title II (§2510) of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246) as §1240I of the 1985 Food Security Act (P.L. 99-198). 16 U.S.C. 3839aa-9.
Authorization expires	Permanent authorization.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/awep

EQIP—Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)

Administering agency(s)	NRCS.
Program description	CIG is a subprogram of EQIP that awards competitive grants to state and local agencies, non-governmental organizations, tribes, and individuals to implement innovative conservation techniques and practices. The program was first implemented in FY2004. Annual requests for proposals are published in the *Federal Register* and include separate funding categories for national, state, Chesapeake Bay, and Mississippi River Basin competitions. Examples of eligible projects include market systems for pollution reduction, demonstrating precision agriculture, capturing nutrients through a community anaerobic digester, and establishing a tribal partnership for regional habitat conservation.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	Amends the grants to cover air quality concerns associated with agriculture (including greenhouse gas emissions); and expands the CIG objectives to include forest resource management and projects that provide conservation benefits through increased participation by producers of specialty crops.
National scope	Available nationwide with select states offering state competitions. CIG awarded a total of $30 million (61 projects in 40 states) in FY2011. In FY2012, NRCS offered two national CIG competitions. The first competition ($20 million) focused on nutrient management, energy conservation, soil health, wildlife, and CIG projects assessment. The second competition ($10 million) focused on market analysis of supply and demand for water quality credits, market rules, and infrastructure.
Leading states	Not applicable.
Backlog/Interest	None identified.
Funding authority	Unspecified subset of EQIP.
FY2012 funding	Unspecified subset of EQIP.
FY2013 Administration request	Unspecified subset of EQIP.
FY2013 funding	Unspecified subset of EQIP.
Statutory authority	Authorized in §2301 of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-171) as §1240H of the Food Security Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198), as amended. Amended by §2509 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246). 16 U.S.C. 3839aa-8.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2014.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/cig

Farmland Protection Program (FPP)[10]

Administering agency(s)	NRCS.
Program description	FPP provides funds to state, tribal, and local governments, and non-governmental organizations to help them purchase conservation easements from willing sellers to limit conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses. The length of time from when a land owner first offers to sell an easement to when it is recorded with the deed to the land can be considerable.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	Changes the program's purpose from protecting topsoil to protecting the land's agricultural use by limiting nonagricultural uses. The program is also restructured to emphasize longer-term and renewable cooperative agreements.
National scope	Available nationwide; however, some states may not have existing farmland protection programs through which FPP is carried out. From the program's inception in FY1996 through FY2011, 3,805 easements on 980,078 acres were acquired, according to the FY2013 budget notes. In FY2011, over 133,882 acres were enrolled on 46 new parcels.
Leading states	In FY2011, the largest amount was obligated in WY ($53.4 million), followed by OH ($12.1 million) and NJ ($8.4 million).
Backlog/Interest	None identified.
Funding authority	Mandatory. FY2009 - $121 million, FY2010 - $150 million, FY2011 - $175 million, FY2012 - $200 million, FY2013 - $200 million, and FY2014 - $200 million.
FY2012 funding	$150 million (authorization reduced by $50 million).
FY2013 Administration request	$200 million.
FY2013 funding	Continuation of the FY2012 levels, including the reduction in authority, until March 27, 2013.
Statutory authority	Authorized in §388 of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 as §1238H-§1238I of the 1985 Food Security Act (P.L. 99-198), as amended. Amended by §2401 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246). 16 U.S.C. 3838h-3838i.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2014.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/easements/farmranch

[10] USDA calls this program the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP).

Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)

Administering agency(s)	Easements are administered by NRCS, agreements are administered by FSA, and NRCS provides technical assistance for both.
Program description	GRP uses long-term rental agreements and easements to help land owners and producers restore and protect grasslands while maintaining them in a condition suitable for grazing using common management practices.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	Directs 40% of funds to rental contracts (10-, 15-, and 20-year duration) and 60% for permanent easements; authorizes the enrollment of 1.22 million acres between FY2009 and FY2012; gives priority enrollment to certain expiring CRP lands; tribal lands are now eligible for the program.
National scope	Available nationwide. In FY2011, a total of $70.7 million was obligated and committed, $56.3 million to GRP easements and $14.5 million to rental contracts. In FY2011, 328 new participants enrolled 202,362 acres, according to information in the FY2012 budget notes.
Leading states	In FY2011, states with the most funding obligated were ID ($4.6 million), TX ($1.46 million), and WY ($1.2 million).
Backlog/Interest	None identified.
Funding authority	Mandatory. Authorized to enroll 1.22 million acres between FY2009-FY2012.
FY2012 est. funding	$62 million (reduced enrollment total of 209,000 acres in FY2012, approximate $30 million reduction).
FY2013 Administration request	$4.6 million (subject to reauthorization).
FY2013 funding	Authority was extended to September 30, 2013, in the American Taxpayers Relief Act (P.L. 112-240); however, the program has little to no mandatory baseline funding to enroll new acres.
Statutory authority	Authorized in §2401 of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-171) as §1238N-§1238Q of the Food Security Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198), as amended. Amended by §2403 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246). 16 U.S.C. 3838n-3838q.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2013.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/easements/grassland

Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)

Administering agency(s)	NRCS.
Program description	Assists landowners in restoring and enhancing forest ecosystems using 10-year agreements, 30-year easements, and permanent easements.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	Allows permanent easements; directs 40% of funds to cost-share agreements and 60% for 30-year or permanent easements; and authorizes mandatory funding through the CCC.
National scope	Not available nationwide. Limited participation in AR, CA, GA, IN, KY, ME, MI, MS, OH, OK, OR, PA, and SC.
Leading states	The program was initially introduced as a pilot program in AR, ME, and MS. In FY2011, 43 applications were enrolled into easements encompassing 22,995 acres. In FY2011, states with the most funding obligated were OR ($5.1 million), OK ($3.7 million), and GA ($2.5 million).
Backlog/Interest	During FY2011, a total of 215 applications were submitted and 43 applications were enrolled (20%).
Funding authority	Mandatory. $9.75 million annually for FY2009-FY2012.
FY2012 funding	$9.75 million.
FY2013 Administration request	$0.
FY2013 funding	Authority was extended to September 30, 2013, in the American Taxpayers Relief Act (P.L. 112-240); however, the program has little to no mandatory baseline funding to enroll new acres.
Statutory authority	Authorized in Title V Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 (P.L. 108-148), as amended. Amended by §8205 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246). 16 U.S.C. 6572.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2013.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/easements/forests

Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Program

Administering agency(s)	NRCS.
Program description	The RC&D program provides support in the form of NRCS staff coordinators to authorized county and multi-county areas. Coordinators assist state and local units of government and non-profits to develop and carry out programs to conserve and improve natural resources and the use of land, and improve conditions in rural America.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	Emphasizes the locally led planning process to provide assistance for implementing area plans.
National scope	The FY2011 long-term continuing resolution (P.L. 112-10) terminated funding for the RC&D program. The termination of funding continued in the FY2012 appropriations (P.L. 112-55), as requested by the Administration.
Leading states	A small of funding was apportioned in FY2011 to close out the program. States with the most funding obligated and most staff years were TX ($1.2 million, 10 staff years), IA ($846,000, 7 staff years), and KY ($756,000, 7 staff years).
Backlog/Interest	USDA is currently closing out the program in which many RC&D councils will likely dissolve.
Funding authority	Discretionary. No amount specified.
FY2012 funding	$0.
FY2013 Administration request	$0.
FY2013 funding	$0.
Statutory authority	Authorized in §31 and §32 of the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act (P.L. 89-796), as amended. Amended by §2805 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246). 16 U.S.C. 3451-3459.
Authorization expires	Permanent authorization.

Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program

Administering agency(s)	FSA.
Program description	The Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program encourages owners and operators of privately held farm, ranch, and forest land to voluntarily make that land available for access by the public for wildlife-dependent recreation, including hunting or fishing, under programs implemented by state or tribal governments. Competitive grants are offered to states and tribal governments for expanding existing access programs or creating new programs. Grants are reduced by 25% if opening dates for migratory bird hunting in a state are not consistent for residents and nonresidents.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	Program created in the 2008 farm bill.
National scope	Available nationwide. According to FSA, 26 states have public access programs for hunting, fishing, and other related activities. An unknown number of tribal governments have similar public access programs.
Leading states	In FY2011, CA, GA, HI, MT, NH, ND, PA, TX, VA, WA, WY, and the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation were awarded grants.
Backlog/Interest	None identified.
Funding authority	Mandatory: $50 million for FY2009-FY2012. Discretionary: $10 million for FY2013.
FY2012 est. funding	$0 (authorization reduced by approximately $17 million).
FY2013 Administration request	$5 million (to remain available until expended).
FY2013 funding	$0.
Statutory authority	Authorized in Title II, §2606 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246) as §1240R of the Food Security Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198). 16 U.S.C. 3839bb-5.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2013.
Program website	http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=copr&topic=pahp

Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations

Administering agency(s)	NRCS.
Program description	Also referred to as the Small Watershed Program, Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations are two separate authorizations under which more than 11,000 structures have been built in more than 1,700 active and completed projects. The P.L. 78-534 Flood Prevention Operations Program authorizes 11 projects, while the P.L. 83-566 Small Watershed Operations Program authorizes watershed projects generally. Projects may be authorized for any of 8 purposes; almost all projects have flood control as an authorized purpose. Under P.L. 566, NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to plan and install projects on private lands, in cooperation with local sponsors, states, and other public agencies. The small watershed project costs are shared with local partners. Projects are limited to a maximum size, including 25,000 acre-feet of total capacity and 250,000 acres in extent. Projects above a specified size require congressional committee authorization.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	None.
National scope	Available nationwide. A total of 439 work plans are complete under P.L. 534, and 1,790 are active or completed under P.L. 566, according to the FY2013 budget notes. In FY2011, one new P.L. 566 project was authorized in MN.
Leading states	No funding was appropriated in FY2011.
Backlog/Interest	NRCS identifies a total of $707 million in active unfunded federal commitments for approximately 300 active authorized P.L. 566 projects. The complete authorized unfunded federal commitment totals $921 million, with the greatest value of unfunded commitments is in TX ($245 million), OK ($126 million), and MO ($111 million), according to the FY2013 budget notes.
Funding authority	Discretionary. No amount specified.
FY2012 funding	$0.
FY2013 Administration request	$0.
FY2013 funding	$0.
Statutory authority	Authorized in the Flood Control Act of 1944 (P.L. 78-534), as amended, and the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act (P.L. 83-566), as amended. 33 U.S.C. 701b-1 and 16 U.S.C. 1000 et. seq.
Authorization expires	Permanent authorization.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/national/programs/landscape/?&cid=nrcs143_008271

Watershed Rehabilitation Program

Administering agency(s)	NRCS.
Program description	The Watershed Rehabilitation Program provides technical and financial assistance for planning, design, and implementation to rehabilitate aging watershed dam projects (including upgrading or removing dams) in communities to address health and safety concerns. Only dams constructed under the Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations program (see "Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations" above) are eligible. Small watershed project dams have a 50-year design life, and 2,317 reached or exceeded that time span by the end of 2011. By the end of 2015, this number will be 4,480, according to the FY2013 budget notes.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	Reauthorizes both mandatory and discretionary funding.
National scope	Only available for dams built through the Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations program and the RC&D program (see discussions above). In FY2011, the rehabilitation of 234 dams was authorized in 28 states, and the rehabilitation of 110 dams was complete, according to the FY2013 budget notes.
Leading states	The largest number of funded dam projects (2000-2011) are in OK (49), MS (24), and TX (20); states with the highest allocation in FY2011 were OK ($2.4 million), NE ($1.6 million), and TX ($1.4 million).
Backlog/Interest	In FY2011, over $34.9 million in requests were received from public sponsors of 110 high-priority dams to have the condition of their dams assessed in consideration for rehabilitation.
Funding authority	Mandatory: FY2009, $100 million. Discretionary: $85 million annually, FY2008-FY2012.
FY2012 funding	$15 million in discretionary funding and $0 in mandatory funding (authorization reduced by $165 million).
FY2013 Administration request	$0 in discretionary funding and $0 in mandatory funding (permanently cancel the $165 million of annual carry-over).
FY2013 funding	Continuation of FY2012 funding levels, including the reduction in authority, until March 27, 2013.
Statutory authority	Authorized in §313 of the Grain Standards and Warehouse Improvement Act of 2000 (P.L. 106-472) as §14 of the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act, as amended. Amended by §2803 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246). 16 U.S.C. 1012.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2013.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/landscape/wr

Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)

Administering agency(s)	NRCS.
Program description	WRP funds the purchase of easements (30 years or permanent), restoration agreements (usually 10 years in length), and 30-year contracts to assist land owners in protecting and restoring wetlands. It provides technical and financial assistance, and emphasizes restoration to original natural conditions where possible.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	Increases the WRP maximum enrollment cap to over 3.014 million acres (up from a previous cap of 2.275 million acres); expands eligible lands to include certain types of private and tribal wetlands, croplands, and grasslands, as well as lands that meet the habitat needs of specific wildlife species; changes the payment schedule for easements; limits wetland restoration payments; specifies criteria for ranking program applications; requires USDA conduct an annual survey of the Prairie Pothole Region starting with FY2008; and requires USDA to submit a report to Congress on long-term conservation easements under the program.
National scope	Available nationwide. Through FY2011, 2.5 million acres have been enrolled, with easements closed and restored on 2 million acres. In 2011, more than 200,186 acres were enrolled in over 1,139 projects, according to the FY2013 budget notes.
Leading states	In FY2011, the largest number of agreements (including contracts and 30-year and permanent easements) were signed in ND (182), followed by MN (131) and SD (92). The largest numbers of enrolled acres were in ND (31,344 acres), FL (22,879 acres), and LA (18,876 acres). The greatest obligation of funding was in FL ($101 million), LA ($43.6 million), and IA ($37.4 million).
Backlog/Interest	Not available.
Funding authority	Mandatory. Maximum enrollment of 3.014 million acres at any one time. No funding amount specified.
FY2012 est. funding	$417 million (based on a reduced enrollment total of 271,158 acres in FY2012, approximate $200 million reduction).
FY2013 Administration request	$224 million.
FY2013 funding	Authority was extended to September 30, 2013, in the American Taxpayers Relief Act (P.L. 112-240). When authorized in the 2008 farm bill, WRP did not include budgetary baseline beyond FY2012. Temporary reductions in FY2011 and FY2012 annual appropriations acts limited USDA's ability to enroll the authorized level of acres. This resulted in limited baseline being carried forward into FY2013, whereas it would have otherwise been expended by the end of FY2012. With the current farm bill extension, WRP can presumably utilize this additional baseline to enroll acres within its original authorized acreage cap.
Statutory authority	Authorized in §1438 of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990 (P.L. 101-624) as §1237-§1237F of the 1985 Food Security Act (P.L. 99-198), as amended. Amended by §2201-2208 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246). 16 U.S.C. 3837-3837f.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2013.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/easements/wetlands

Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)

Administering agency(s)	NRCS.
Program description	WHIP provides technical and financial assistance to eligible participants to develop upland wildlife, wetland wildlife, threatened and endangered species, fish and other types of wildlife habitat. Participants enter into contracts, usually 5 to 10 years in duration, which pays up to 75% of the contract implementation cost.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	Limits program eligibility to focus on "the development of wildlife habitat on private agricultural land, nonindustrial private forest land, and tribal lands," thus potentially excluding some previously covered areas (i.e., non-agricultural lands). It also allows USDA to provide priority to projects that address issues raised by state, regional, and national conservation initiatives.
National scope	Available nationwide. In FY2011, over 3,800 agreements were enrolled on almost 850,000 acres.
Leading states	In FY2011, the largest number of contracts was in GA (412), followed by AL (337) and TX (283). The largest number of enrolled acres was in TX (317,449 acres), followed by ME (39,049 acres) and AK (35,022 acres). The greatest obligation of funding was in TX ($11.8 million), followed by GA ($7.5 million) and AL ($4.5 million).
Backlog/Interest	In FY2011, an additional 3,400 eligible applications valued at over $33 million remain unfunded.
Funding authority	Mandatory. $85 million annually FY2009-FY2014.
FY2012 funding	$50 million (authorization reduced by $35 million).
FY2013 Administration request	$73 million (authorization reduced by $12 million).
FY2013 funding	Continuation of the FY2012 levels, including the reduction in authority, until March 27, 2013.
Statutory authority	Authorized in §387 of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-127) as §1240N of the 1985 Food Security Act (P.L. 99-198), as amended. Amended by §2602 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246). 16 U.S.C. 3839bb-1.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2014.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/whip

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